



Association for Children's Mental Health

WRITTEN TESTIMONY FOR THE SENATE MICHIGAN COMPETITIVENESS COMMITTEE

July 29, 2013

Chairman Senator Kahn and Members of the Committee:

My name is Gail Lanphear, Board President of The Association for Children's Mental Health (ACMH) which represents a voice for nearly three hundred thousand children with mental, emotional and/or behavioral disorders and their families in Michigan.

On behalf of these children and families I want to thank you for your efforts on the critical issue of increasing federal Medicaid resources for families.

In the wake of the tragedy in Newton, Connecticut; there has been a much needed focus on children's mental health issues at both the state and national levels. This focus is long overdue.

Families whose children experience serious mental health disorders need timely access to a full array of services in every area of the state. Supports and services for this population are uneven across the state and have been underfunded relative to other populations with disabilities for at least two decades.

A Healthy Michigan infusion of federal Medicaid dollars is critically needed to fund services for family members who have the daunting responsibility of caring for a child with a mental, emotional and/or behavioral disorder. Family members with health care coverage are far better able to care for their children with special needs than those who are unable to access appropriate physical and behavioral health services.

From a financial standpoint, increased Medicaid resources can mean a significant decrease in the need for children's out of home placements; placements often required when family members are physically and mentally depleted from months or years of inordinate responsibilities without appropriate supports and services from the community. These resources can cut costs for emergency room care and unnecessary hospitalizations; and prevent inappropriate entry into the juvenile justice system where youths are often denied needed mental health support and treatment services.

Prevention/Early Intervention Services are the first line of defense against the development of more serious mental health issues in the future for both caregiver and child. Increased revenue could fund these proven programs.

Family member peer support is another valuable program for families. Studies have shown that peer support is a life line to families whose children have serious mental health issues. A full array of community based programs that provide support and treatment for children and family members are the key to successful outcomes for children with serious mental health needs and their families. Expanded federal Medicaid funding would increase access to these programs.

ACMH strongly supports wellness and healthy living incentives for all health insurance programs. It does however, have concerns about large increases in premiums and copays and unrealistic or punitive requirements that will pose barriers to those most in need.

Healthy families make a Healthy Michigan. Please increase Medicaid resources to Michigan families. The result will be positive for all Michigan citizens.

Thank you so much for the opportunity to provide testimony and your consideration of our comments. If The Association can be a resource to you at any time, it would be pleased to do so.

Respectfully submitted,

Gail Lanphear
ACMH Board President
gaillanphear@gmail.com

6017 W St Joe Hwy, Suite 200, Lansing MI 48917

Phone: 517-372-4016 ♦ Fax: 517-372-4032 ♦ Parent Line: 1-888-ACMHKID(226-4543)

www.acmh-mi.org